

BIKE TRAIL AND GREENWAYS

Frequently Asked questions (FAQs)

1. *What are trails and greenways?*

Greenways are corridors of protected open space managed for conservation and recreation purposes. Greenways often follow natural land or water features and link nature reserves, parks, cultural features and historic sites with each other and with populated areas. Greenways can be publicly or privately owned and some are the result of public/private partnerships. Trails are paths used for walking, bicycling, horseback riding or other forms of recreation or transportation.

2. *Why establish trails and greenways?*

Trails and greenways positively impact individuals and improve communities by providing not only recreation and transportation opportunities, but also by influencing economic and community development. Some of the many trails and greenways benefits include:

- Making communities better places to live by preserving and creating open spaces;
- Creating new opportunities for outdoor recreation and non-motorized transportation;
- Encouraging physical fitness and healthy lifestyles, preserving culturally & historically valuable areas; strengthening local economies through tourism and job development;
- Protecting the environment.

3. *How do trails and greenways support economic development?*

Trails and greenways provide countless opportunities for economic renewal and growth. The Big Creek Greenway Trail will provide pedestrian and bicycle access to restaurants and other businesses, without the need for additional parking and traffic congestion. In addition, it will increase property values and tourism and recreation-related spending on items such as bicycles, in-line skates and lodging. In a 1992 study, the National Park Service estimated the average economic activity associated with three (3) multi-purpose trails in Florida, California and Iowa was \$1.5 million annually.

Retail businesses near the trail should benefit slightly because of increased traffic. Property values are anticipated to go up because of the existence of the trail. Note that according to a 2000 National Association of Home Builders Survey of what active adults and older seniors want in their communities, walking and jogging trails ranked #1.

4. *Do multi-purpose trails reduce property values?*

Cleveland Metroparks has surveyed property values of properties adjacent to their reservations and trails and have found that they average 15% higher than properties elsewhere in the adjoining neighborhoods. This is consistent with trends nationally. A long list of detailed studies is available at:

http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/trail_plans/rail_trail_studies.html, and other studies may be available at: <http://www.opraonline.org/> and <http://www.railstrails.org/index.html>.

5. *How do trails and greenways promote healthy living?*

Many people realize exercise is important for maintaining good health in all stages of life; however many do not regularly exercise. The U.S. Surgeon General estimates that 60% of American adults are not regularly active and another 25% are not active at all. A recent Columbus Dispatch article (Nov. 12, 2007) cited a study which states that if all Americans aged 10-74 walked or biked a half-hour a day instead of driving, they would shed more than 3 billion pounds overall, cut annual carbon dioxide emissions by 64 million tons and save 6.5 billion gallons of gasoline.

In communities across the country, people do not have access to trails, parks, or other recreation areas close to their homes. Trails and greenways provide a safe, inexpensive avenue for regular exercise for people living in rural, urban and suburban areas. Trails and greenways help improve air and water quality. For example, communities with trails provide enjoyable and safe options for transportation, which reduces air pollution. By protecting land along rivers and streams, greenways prevent soil erosion and filter pollution caused by agricultural and road runoff.

6. *Where do I get a copy of the design plans?*

The concept plans are not available at this time because the trail is still being designed. They will be available upon completion of the study which is scheduled for the end of 2008.

7. *Do multi-purpose trails create privacy issues for homeowners?*

This is a common fear before a trail is built, but after a trail is built most homeowners are happy to live near it. Fences or vegetation may be used as screening but with other trails, the experience has been that many abutters who have had fencing installed later remove the fencing because it is unnecessary and blocks their own access to the trail. Several large studies of multi-purpose trails have revealed that neighbors become the most frequent users of the trails. It is also worthwhile to note that trees may need to be removed to install fencing and that certain types of fencing can impede the movement of wildlife. We are contacting residents early in the design process to solicit your concerns and to incorporate solutions into the design process.

8. *What will prevent trail users from parking on my street?*

The Big Creek Greenway Trail will connect Big Creek Reservation, Marquardt Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Memphis Picnic Area, Brookside Reservation, John M. Coyne Brooklyn Recreation Center, City Hall, and Brooklyn schools. All of these parks, schools, and public buildings provide access to the trail and have abundant parking, so there should be no need for trail users to park on neighborhood streets.

9. *Will trail users cut through my property?*

This is unlikely. The Big Creek Greenway Trail will have access points at several city parks (see #8) so that it will be easy for trail users to get on and off the trail without going through private property. Trespassing on adjacent private property is not a problem on multi-purpose trails because users are generally headed to a specific destination and are not interested in lingering in neighborhoods. If you have specific concerns, please contact us so we can help make sure that those concerns are included into planning and design phases of the project.

10. Will motorized vehicles, especially motorcycles and snowmobiles be allowed on the trail?

The only motorized vehicles allowed on the trail would be emergency vehicles, maintenance vehicles and motorized wheel chairs. Other motorized vehicles definitely will not be allowed. Anyone caught would be subject to a fine. The experience on other multi-purpose trails has been that trail users and trail neighbors have a keen interest in keeping motorized vehicles off the trails. The few incidents that have occurred have been immediately reported and dealt with. Bollards at the intersection of the trail and roads will also provide a physical deterrent to motorized vehicles on the trail.

11. Will there be noise from trail users?

About the only noise from the trail will be the voices of those using the trail.

12. Who is going to pick up the litter?

Surveys of many existing trails indicate that litter is virtually non-existent. The feeling of community ownership of trails reduces the incidents of minor crime such as litter, graffiti and vandalism.

13. Do trails attract crime?

Generally - no. The self-policing nature of a multi-purpose trail helps suppress crime. Past studies, trail survey results, letters from law enforcement officials, and comparisons to national crime figures all indicate that multi-purpose trails are safe places for local residents and visitors to enjoy. While common sense and preventative measures should be used on trails to ensure the lowest possible levels of crime, trails remain much safer than many other environments. Articles at: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1145/is_8_35/ai_65132250 and http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/pet_bike/docs/rt_safecomm.pdf have more information about safety and crime data issues.

14. Who polices the trail?

The trail will be policed by City of Brooklyn police officers on bicycles.

15. Will the communities be liable for accidents on the multi-purpose trail?

The communities will face the same liability as they currently have for accidents on the roads, sidewalks, recreation areas and conservation areas. These liability costs are usually minimal and are capped by statute.

16. Will the trail be lit?

Small sections of the trail, such as trailheads, will have lights, but the majority of the trail will be unlit.

17. Will there be restroom facilities on the trail?

Several parks, including Big Creek Reservation, Marquardt Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Memphis Picnic Area, and Brookside Reservation have existing restroom facilities.

18. Will dogs be allowed on the trails?

Yes, dogs will be allowed on the trail. Patrons using the trail with their dogs will be required to follow all City of Brooklyn leash laws and clean up after their pets.

19. What will be done to assure safe road crossings where the trail intersects a road?

One benefit of the proposed Big Creek Greenway Trails is the limited number of road intersections required. Underpasses beneath I-480, existing railroad tracks, and Ridge Road will alleviate the need for road intersections. Stop signs will be installed on the trail at the locations of road intersections such as the neighborhood connectors or where underpasses are not appropriate.

20. What will be the cost of the trail, and who will pay for future trail maintenance and improvements?

The cost of the trail will be based on various factors to building the trail, including the route chosen; materials needed and support structures that must be built. The trail's cost cannot be gauged at this time, since a final plan has yet to be decided upon. Once that plan is identified, however, grants and other funding sources will be identified and pursued to supplement the cost of the trail. Future trail maintenance and improvements will be paid for by the City of Brooklyn.